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Economic and Social Council

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Statistical Commission
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Item 4 (k) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions

Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2011/24, chap. I.A), the present note is submitted to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2011 or earlier that are relevant to the work of the Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the Statistics Division, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Assembly and the Council. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2012/1.

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I. Follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

1. In its resolution 65/1, entitled "Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals", the General Assembly, among other things, requested the Secretary-General to make recommendations for further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. At the time of writing of the present report, the General Assembly was considering reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/66/1) and on accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 (A/66/126). The latter report describes, the Secretariat's reflections on and preparations for the post-Millennium Development Goals, post-2015 period.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

2. Since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators, as well as related issues of capacity-building, on a continuous basis. At its forty-third session, the Commission will consider a report of the Secretary-General on development indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2012/29), as well as the report of the World Bank on efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development (E/CN.3/2012/16). In the report on the Millennium Development Goals, the Secretary-General recalls a recommendation by the 2011 International Conference on the Millennium Development Goals Statistics, held in Manila in October 2011 and organized by the Statistics Division and the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines, which called for the full involvement of the statistical community in the setting of targets and indicators for Millennium Development Goals beyond 2015 and for sustaining the gains achieved in statistical capacity-building.

3. The Statistics Division currently executes several multi-year statistical capacity-building projects covering a wide range of statistical areas, with special focus on data collection and dissemination of Millennium Development Goal indicators. The Division also executes several capacity-building projects in support of the 2010 population and housing census round and for the improvement of gender statistics, which will contribute to increasing the availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data.

II. United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

4. In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 64/236, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development is being organized. The Conference will take place in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June 2012 and will mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also held in Rio de Janeiro, and the tenth anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg. It is envisaged as a Conference at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government or other representatives. In paragraph 22 of resolution 64/236, the General Assembly invited relevant stakeholders, including organizations and bodies of the United Nations, international financial institutions and major groups involved in the area of sustainable development, to provide ideas and proposals reflecting their experiences and lessons learned as a contribution to the preparatory process.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

5. The Statistical Commission regularly considers items relating to environmental statistics and environmental accounting. At its forty-third session, the Commission will do so again under agenda items 3 (e), on environmental-economic accounting, and 3 (f) on environment statistics. For its consideration of the items, the Commission will have before it the report of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (E/CN.3/2012/8) and the report of the Secretary-General on revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (E/CN.3/2012/9). Both the proposed Framework for the Development of Environmental Statistics and the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting are considered important and indispensable tools for the formulation and monitoring of policies in support of sustainable development.

III. Multi-year programme of work for annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

6. As mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions is to be held annually in the early part of the year. In its decision 2011/208, the Council decided to adopt the following theme for its annual ministerial review for 2012: "Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals". The substantive contributions of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential for the success of the reviews.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

7. The Chair of the Statistical Commission will participate in the meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council with the chairs of the functional commissions in February 2012 and will provide input to the Council's 2012 annual ministerial review. The Chair will brief the Bureau of the Council on the Commission's work in the area of labour statistics. The Commission had conducted a programme review on this topic in 2008 (see E/CN.3/2008/2) and subsequently considered two reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (E/CN.3/2009/12 and E/CN.3/2010/18), in which the ongoing methodological and capacity-building work of ILO is described.

IV. Global geospatial information management

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

8. On the request of the Economic and Social Council (decision 2010/240) the Secretary-General submitted to the Council at its substantive session of 2011 a report on global geospatial information management (E/2011/89).

9. In its resolution 2011/24, the Council took note of the report and the recommendations contained therein; recognized the need to promote international cooperation in the field of global geospatial information; decided, in that regard, to establish the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, to be established and administered within existing resources and organized accordingly, and requested the Committee to present to the Council in 2016 a comprehensive review of all aspects of its work and operations, in order to allow Member States to assess its effectiveness; encouraged Member States to hold regular high-level, multi-stakeholder discussions on global geospatial information, including through the convening of global forums, with a view to promoting a comprehensive dialogue with all relevant actors and bodies; and emphasized the importance of promoting national, regional and global efforts to foster the exchange of knowledge and expertise, to assist developing countries in building and strengthening national capacities in this field.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

10. The Statistics Division, together with the Cartographic Section of the Department of Field Support, organized the first meeting of the newly created United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management on 26 October 2011 in Seoul. The meeting was preceded by a High-level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management (24-26 October 2011). The Commission is being kept informed regarding the latest developments in this field, and at its forty-third session will consider global geospatial information management based on a report of the Secretary-General on the issue (E/CN.3/2012/31).

V. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

11. The Economic and Social Council adopted two resolutions in 2005 and 2006 on the recommendation of the Statistical Commission. One was on strengthening statistical capacity (resolution 2006/6), and the other was on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (resolution 2005/13). In resolution 2006/6, the Council called for an intensification of efforts to support national statistical programmes in strengthening their capacity. In resolution 2005/13, the Council emphasized the importance of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme for socio-economic planning, and requested increased support for the Programme.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

12. At its forty-third session, the Commission will consider specific follow-up actions to those resolutions under agenda items 3 (a), Programme review: population and housing censuses, and 3 (m), Efforts in developing a plan of action on statistical development. The documentation presented under these items describes in detail activities undertaken by the Statistics Division and by its partner agencies to improve the availability and quality of data, to support the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round and to improve the coordination and impact of technical cooperation activities.

VI. Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data on migration, ageing, youth and people with disabilities

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

13. In its resolution 65/170 on international migration and development, the General Assembly called upon the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations and multilateral institutions to enhance their cooperation in the promotion and development of methodologies for the collection and processing of internationally comparable statistical data on international migration and the situation of migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination, and to assist Member States in their capacity-building efforts in this regard.

14. In its resolution 66/127 on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing the General Assembly recommended that Member States enhance their capacity regarding more effective data collection, statistics and qualitative information, in order to better assess the situation of older persons. It also encouraged the international community and relevant agencies of the United Nations system to support national efforts to provide funding for research and data-collection initiatives on ageing as appropriate.

15. Furthermore, in the outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, held in New York on 25 and 26 July 2011, the Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to propose a set of possible indicators linked to the World Programme of Action for Youth and the proposed goals and targets.

16. In its resolution 65/186 on realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond the General Assembly called upon Governments to strengthen the collection and compilation of national data and information about the situation of persons with disabilities, and invited Governments to provide, where available, relevant data and statistics to the appropriate mechanism within the United Nations system including the Statistical Commission. It also requested the United Nations system to facilitate technical assistance for capacity-building and for the collection and compilation of national and regional data and statistics on disability.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

17. The Commission continues to be active in these important policy areas, supporting the development of new methodologies where necessary and improving the collection of data. After an interruption of several years, the Statistics Division resumed in 2011 the collection of data on annual migration flows, through the regular *Demographic Yearbook* data collection system. The data furnished by Member States will be published in the *Yearbook*. The data on migrant stock will continue to be collected through the *Yearbook* census questionnaire. Moreover, data generated by the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme will improve the availability of information regarding ageing and youth (see also section V above). Furthermore, the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized an expert group meeting on quantitative indicators for the World Programme of Action for Youth in December 2011, to which the Statistical Division made substantive inputs. The issue of disability statistics is regularly considered by the Commission: at its forty-third session, the Commission will review the progress made by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (see E/CN.3/2012/21).